

## A former house of correction offers shelter for those down on their luck



Herald & Review/Lisa Morrison Resident Ryan Eads, right, takes community members including Sue Barter, left, and Phyllis Smothers on a tour of the women's portion of the new Decatur CARE Rescue Mission during their open house.

By Tony Reid

**DECATUR** — Ryan Eads believes one good turn deserves another.

So she rolled up her sleeves and got busy helping to clean up and decorate the Decatur CARE Rescue Missions' rehabilitated new home at 2175 E. Pershing Road, a former Illinois Department of Corrections work release center.

The 19,000-square-foot building now holds living space for homeless men and the Grace House shelter for homeless women, including women with children. Eads, 23, is a resident and was busy giving conducted tours Sunday as Decatur CARE Rescue Missions staged an open house to thank all those who donated time and money to help get it ready.

Eads, who has been sheltered by Grace since being released from prison Nov. 1, doesn't mince words: "Grace House saved me," she said. "They are helping me get my life back on track, and I wanted to help them."

Eads has children age 5 and 3 who aren't living with her right now, and she's aiming at putting her world back together so they can be a family again. "I want to start over around here," she added. "And Grace is helping me."

The former Grace House home on East Cantrell Street is up for sale, while the previous men's homeless mission downtown on Water Street will carry on offering food, church services and a temporary overnight refuge.

The new Pershing Road combined mission is housing 35 residents currently but will eventually be filled with about 80 men and women who live in separate wings and take their meals at different times. More room for everyone means more space to offer job-related skills training and other assistance, plus longer stay times: Formerly limited to 90 days, residents who do well can now stay on for another six months.

"Before, I'd have to ask them to leave, but their roots wasn't always down in the Earth very good," said Decatur CARE Executive Director Mick McCammack, 63. "They would go out there and fail sometimes, and get scared."

McCammack's own worries center on keeping it all going. He estimates it will cost an extra \$10,000 a month to run the Pershing Road mission, and that means finding donors willing to consistently dig their hands into their pockets. You can donate by calling (217) 855-2449.

As a man used to transforming lives, however, he has a simple answer when asked whether he'll find the new money.

"Faith," he said.